

The Book of JAMES

and why it matters...

STUDY GUIDE

SESSION 6: James 3:1-12

Study Guide by Francis Chan

DISCUSS

- If you were publishing this passage as an article or a blog post, what title would you give it?
- Why do you think James wrote this? What problem was occurring that he was trying to correct?
- Who is being “called out” by James in verse 1? Why do you think teachers will be judged with greater strictness?
- What do you think verse 2 has to do with verse 1? Is it explaining the behavior of errant teachers, excusing them, or just generally instructing us?
- We see the word *body* at the end of verse 2. That word can actually mean several different things in the New Testament. What do you think it means here?
- How does mastery of one’s speech keep the whole body in check?
- Have you ever seen a church dispute settled by a leader who spoke wisely, clearly, and kindly? How did that happen?
- How is the tongue like a bit in a horse’s mouth?
- How is it like the rudder of a ship?

- How is it like a fire?
- Do you think these comparisons make more sense regarding individual behavior or regarding leadership of a church? Or perhaps both?
- Do you think it's really impossible to "tame the tongue," as it says in verse 8? How would a person do this? If you tried to tame your speaking habits, how would you go about it? How would you describe the situation in verses 9-12? Who is James talking about? What can we guess about these people?

LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Memorization: Learn James 3:9-10. This isn't your normal type of memory verse, but it might prove helpful in real-life situations.

Stop-Phrase: When you find yourself speaking badly about someone, stop—in mid-sentence if you need to. Find a phrase to run through your mind in those cases. Maybe it's James 3:9-10. Maybe it's just "This should not be." Or maybe it's a more positive statement like "Bless the Lord, O my soul" or the prayer from Psalm 19:14.

Encouragement: Think of three people you can encourage this week, and do so. Be as specific as possible. Can you bolster their confidence or their faith?

Thanks: Who has encouraged you in the past? Who has spoken words into your life that truly helped you? Can you find them and thank them for that?

Media Fast: Many of us learn unkind habits of communication from talk radio, cable news, or online videos. If this is a problem for you, engage in a "fast," abstaining from those media sources for a period of time—perhaps the next seven days. Then re-evaluate.